

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01465 181128Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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TRSE-00 /089 W
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O 181050Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7155
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1465

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 18, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

1. ON MARCH 17 GHASSAN TUENI, THE LEBANESE AMBASSADOR TO
THE UNITED NATIONS, FORMALLY ASKED FOR A SECURITY COUNCIL
MEETING TO CONSIDER THE ISRAELI INCURSION.

2. SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM, AIR FORCE COMMANDER
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01465 181128Z

NAJI JAMIL, AND SAIQA COMMANDER ZUHAIR MOSHEN MET WITH
PRESIDENT SARKIS, PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS, FOREIGN
MINISTER BUTROS AND ADF COMMANDER SAMI KHATIB AT BAABDA
PALACE ON MARCH 17. AFTERWARDS, MOHSEN TOLD THE PRESS
THAT "SYRIAN AIRCRAFT ARE FLYING THE SKIES AND SYRIAN
ANTI-AIRCRAFT UNITS ARE ON TOP ALERT" IN SUPPORT OF
THE ADF. DAMASCUS ON MARCH 15 PROMISED TO INCREASE ITS

AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY IN LEBANON, ACCORDING TO AN ADF COMMUNIQUE (SEE BEIRUT 1403), BUT WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY SYRIAN AIRCRAFT HAVE ENTERED LEBANESE AIRSPACE.

3. THE ISRAELIS ARE CONTINUING TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON AND ATTACK TARGETS FURTHER NORTH. ON MARCH 17 ISRAELI AIRCRAFT AGAIN HIT THE TYRE AND NABATIYEH AREAS. INNOCENT CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO DIE.

4. ACCORDING TO AP, THE ISRAELIS ALSO LANDED A HELICOPTER-BORNE FORCE OUTSIDE THE FISHING VILLAGE OF ADLUN, NORTH OF TYRE, WHERE THEY BLEW UP A "PFLP NAVAL BASE" AND KILLED A PFLP COMMANDER CODE-NAMED "JIHAD CARLOS". THE PALESTINIANS PRIVATELY DENY THAT ANY COMMANDO RAID TOOK PLACE. WHETHER OR NOT ISRAELIS FIRED FROM OFFSHORE OR ACTUALLY LANDED, LOCAL OBSERVERS ON THE SCENE REPORT THAT TWO TAXIS CARRYING FIFTEEN PEOPLE, MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WERE DESTROYED AND ALL THE OCCUPANTS WERE KILLED. LOCAL PRESS HAS FRONT-PAGED GRUESOME PICTURES OF THE WRECKS AND THE BODIES. THE PFLP HAS PUBLICLY CONCEDED THE DEATH OF "JIHAD CARLOS" WHO WAS IN ONE OF THE TAXIS AND CALLED HIM AN IMPORTANT MARTYR, BUT HAS PRIVATELY CLAIMED THAT HE WAS A PERSON OF NO IMPORTANCE.

5. WESTERN OBSERVERS WHO HAVE VISITED SOUTH LEBANON SAY THAT DESPITE THE ISRAELI ADVANCES, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01465 181128Z

GIVEN A SURPRISINGLY GOOD ACCOUNT OF THEMSELVES. A DATT SOURCE ON MARCH 17 OBSERVED PALESTINIAN TROOPS IN GOOD ORDER ALONG THE ROAD NORTH OF TYRE. ACCORDING TO AN ARAB MILITARY ATTACHE, HOWEVER, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE SUFFERED HIGH CASUALTIES: APPROXIMATELY 180 KILLED, 320 WOUNDED AND 200 CAPTURED ON MARCH 15 ALONE (SEE IR 6 857 0076 78).

6. DURING THE EVENING OF MARCH 17-18 ARMED MILITIA AGAIN REAPPEARED ON THE STREETS OF WEST BEIRUT. MOREOVER, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE DECEMBER 1976, ARMED MILITIA APPEARED ALONG THE COAST ROAD IN FRONT OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, APPARENTLY TO GUARD AGAINST A FEARED ISRAELI SEA-BORNE LANDING AFTER REPORTS OF THE ATTACK AT ADLUN. FROM ABOUT 0300 HOURS TO 0500 HOURS, THE MILITIA DIRECTED SMALL ARMS FIRE SEAWARD, APPARENTLY AIMING AT PHANTOM ISRAELI BOATS. THE MILITIA DISAPPEARED ON THE COAST ROAD AT ABOUT 0600 HOURS. A SEMBLANCE OF NORMALITY RETURNED TO WEST BEIRUT SOON AFTERWARDS, AS TRAFFIC PICKED UP AND SHOPS REOPENED.

7. THE ISRAELI INCURSION HAS HAD ADVERSE AND QUITE LIKELY LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT. IN

ADDITION TO THE REAPPEARANCE OF ARMED MILITIA AT NIGHT, THE NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IN GENERAL REPRESENT A SERIOUS PROBLEM, AS EVIDENCED BY THE ILLEGAL SEIZURE OF APARTMENTS AND GUNBATTLES THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED (SEE BEIRUT 1437). ACCORDING TO A LEBANESE POLICE REPORT, FIFTEEN PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN THESE BATTLES IN THE BEIRUT AREA ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 16-17. REFUGEES ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 17-18 FORCED THEIR WAY INTO SEVERAL APARTMENTS NEAR THE EMBASSY, INCLUDING ONE OCCUPIED BY AN AMERICAN UNMO. LOCAL MILITIA LATER EXPELLED THEM.
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